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ABSTRACT

Political science education is currently experiencing a variety of pressures in the form of increasing demands for expanded and more effective educational opportunities in applied professional studies, basic civics instruction, flexible learning programs, and programs for an increasingly adult undergraduate population. An effective response to these new conditions is illustrated in the "open system" approach used by Empire State College (New York), a nontraditional college consisting of 35 learning centers located around the state. Focusing on the student rather than the institution as the primary actor in education, this college emphasizes a combination of traditional and nontraditional settings, interdisciplinary studies, life-long and experiential learning, and individualized instruction. One case study of an individualized program in policy analysis illustrates Empire State College's open system. An employed adult student needing 40 credits to complete a Bachelor's degree was able to fulfill his requirements through a combination of work experience, traditional research and reading courses, and interview projects. It is clear that the move toward nontraditional teaching forms will affect every aspect of political science education, necessitating new structural forms, new curriculum strategies, and a new kind of teaching strategy. (LP)

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UNDERGRADUATE POLITICAL SCIENCE INSTRUCTION WITHIN

NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

The teaching mission of political science is currently experiencing a variety of new pressures in the form of increasing demands for expanded and more effective educational opportunities in applied professional studies, basic civic instruction, individualized and time/space flexible learning programs and from a rapidly increasing adult undergraduate population. An effective response to these new conditions will require some fundamental substantive and institutional changes within the teaching activities of the profession.

The paper explores the character of these emerging new educational expectations and conditions within the society and their impact upon the profession. From the present, relatively "closed" system of political science education, the paper envisions the emergence of an "open system" approach to political science education drawing substantially upon currently existing models of non-traditional education. An indepth case study of the non-traditional approach is presented along with a discussion of its implications for the future teaching of political science. Such concepts as individualized degree program planning and instruction, interdisciplinary studies, life-long learning, experiential learning and a more expanded conception of student advisement are explored. The paper concludes with a proposal for a formal reconceptualization of the teaching mission of political science.

Undergraduate Political Science Instruction Within Non-Traditional Educational Settings

A Personal Note

Aristotle has remarked that "All who have meditated on the act of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends upon the education of youth."

The more one ponders this statement, the more one is drawn to its truth and its inescapable importance. Increasingly, over the past several years, the authors, as political science educators, have been compelled to meditate it anew, with a renewed concern and sense of urgency. With others, we sense that the fate of the "empire" known as America has become increasingly problematic and a cause for worry. We sense that a deep malaise has crept into the entire environment of higher education which we, as public affairs educators, have felt perhaps with a special keenness. Things are happening - changes occurring - which we know require some fundamental alterations in the way we teach our students about matters of public concern. But of the how and the what and the why, we have been far less certain.

Through different sets of circumstances, we both came from very traditional, orthodox academic settings, to be employed by the Public Affairs Center of Empire State College, a well-established, non-traditional four-year college within the State University of New York. This experience, now in its third year, has served not only to heighten our concern about public affairs education generally, but also has provided us with an opportunity for a much clearer perception of some of the fundamental changes occurring within higher education as a whole and some of the ways in which public affairs education specifically will need to develop if it is to continue to effectively serve the learning needs of students and through them, the broader educational needs of the society as a whole. The experience has been simultaneously painful and exhilarating.

Over the past decade, there has occurred a number of fundamental shifts in the kinds of instructional opportunities available to students, and increasingly expected by them, within the general field of public affairs education.¹ These shifts have been away from many of the traditional subject matter areas and instructional modes that have long characterized the teaching of political science and toward a continuing and increasing demand for 1) applied professional studies, 2) policy studies, 3) broad based general learning programs which better prepare students to understand, cope with and influence the basic public environments of day to day living, and 4) non-traditional instructional formats.

Working within a non-traditional educational setting such as Empire State College has not only provided us with a direct daily exposure to many of these fundamental changes, but also has allowed us to test the fundamental principles and unconventional instructional methods of non-traditional education in terms of teaching political science. Perhaps, most of all, this experience has also brought us into a close and continuing association with what may be the most significant new educational trend of all, that of the increasingly large influx of adult students into our institutions of higher learning. Often engaged in simultaneous full-time employment, these students have educational interests, objectives, expectations and needs which are often quite different from those of the traditional undergraduate student population. Responding to these emerging new academic markets will, we feel,

exert an inevitable and significant impact upon the personnel, organizational, curricular and instructional decisions of political science departments and programs including, though not as soon, those concerned with graduate education as well. The education of adults, as well as youth, is increasingly important to the "fate of the empire".

Our ultimate objective is to address these developing changes and their implications for political science education by exploring the present and future role and impact of non-traditional educational formats upon the subject matter and organizational characteristics of the discipline as a whole. Though this fast developing instructional mode - characterized by such component parts as flexible study schedules, individualized one-on-one teaching, completely open-ended degree program planning and development and the awarding of academic credit for learning derived from general life experiences - is currently in its infancy within contemporary higher education, it is inevitably destined to grow in importance and significance as universities and academic disciplines struggle to adapt to new kinds of students with new instructional needs and expectations within an economic environment of shrinking resources and declining enrollments within 18 - 21 year old age groups.

With this paper, we wish to share some of our observations and experiences and some of the lessons we think we have learned about teaching undergraduate political science within a non-traditional academic setting. Based upon these experiences, we have come to believe that there needs to be a fundamental reconceptualization of the teaching mission of political science in terms of its basic subject matter, organizational and instructional traditions in order to more fully integrate non-traditional educational modes into the field, not as an alternative to traditional modes but as an essential expansion of them in order to more effectively respond to a rapidly growing collection of new student markets and social needs. We believe that we must begin now to plan for a productive and effective accommodation of these inevitable changes within the discipline.

The Argument

The argument presented in this paper is based upon the assumption that there exists an inescapable, reciprocal and organic relationship between the activity of education and the society in which that activity takes place. Each fundamentally affects the character of the other.

This is not to say, however, that the relationship is entirely reinforcing or mutually sustaining. True, education seeks to reflect the basic assumptions and perceptions of the society and does serve as a major social vehicle for maintaining the fundamental character of the society from one generation to the next. Yet, over time, there is ample opportunity for lag, since of the two - if we can for a moment view them as separate - society is by far the more dynamic, moving slowly but inexorably from one state of affairs to another, always changing, always modifying, always different from one year to the next.

Ideally, then, in order to retain a maximum effectiveness in the performance of its basic social functions, education needs to remain constantly "in tandem" with social change. In a strongly stable and slowly moving social environment, education can, of course, more easily accomplish this task, indeed, can be a major contributor to its maintenance. In a rapidly changing society, however, staying "in tandem" becomes increasingly difficult, lag becomes inevitable and increasingly apparent, education becomes less and less relevant and, with accumulated lag, a "crisis" in

education inevitably develops which, of course, is also a social crisis of the highest magnitude.

During the past decade, educational lag and, hence, social crisis has become particularly evident in the area of public affairs education. Public life surges forward - new conditions, new problems, new complexities, new opportunities - while its education partner has slipped further and further into an increasing condition of ineffectiveness, unable to keep up and to educationally manage the fundamental changes sweeping across the public landscape.⁵ Periodically, this lag must be addressed and remedied. Radical change must penetrate to the core of the prevailing traditionalism and, of course, in due time, establish its own traditions. It is an unending tempo, always painful, but always essential.

The major difficulty with traditionalism is not that everything old is per se inferior to anything new, but its inevitable tendency to ultimately place a higher priority upon form than upon function. As functional needs within the broader environment change, they are unable to be effectively met within the traditional forms. The great paradox of traditionalism is that it will often defend its form with such a stubborn and unbending intensity that it is unable to make even the often marginal adjustments that might easily meet its new functional expectations, opting instead to "go down in flames" under the pressure of the inevitable "revolution". In the process, both education and the society often lose things that are of a truly lasting value - the classic "baby with the bath water" syndrome.

The discipline of political science, particularly its teaching component, currently faces such an historical moment. A new set of emerging and broad-based educational needs and expectations in the public affairs area are currently challenging the traditional teaching forms of the discipline. New student markets are pressuring the established institutions for a new kind of education that cannot be so easily accommodated within traditional settings.

The increasing pressure for applied professional studies, policy studies, basic citizenship and leadership training, experiential learning, individualized and open-ended learning opportunities, coupled with a massive influx of adult students, have strained the traditional teaching capacity of the discipline almost to the breaking point. The pressure will continue and it will become stronger in the years ahead. It's time to take a look. Time to be flexible. Time to do some planning, to preserve what is valuable, to shed what is expendable, and to acquire what is necessary.

It would be untrue, of course, to suggest that the discipline has been unaware of these emerging new functional expectations or that it has not moved to accommodate them. The "windows" looking out of the traditional structures and toward the future have been slowly constructed. "Applied" studies are no longer an anathema. "Career" is given at least a token recognition, though an entire subfield in the traditional political science curriculum, public administration, has had to escape through the window in order for its very special needs to be met. Public policy studies now can be found sprinkled throughout the curriculum of every "modern" political science department. A minor field concentration in "public affairs" is seen here and there. Internships stand ready to respond to the experiential needs of students and independent study opportunities are available to those who wish to shun some of the traditional classroom work for a more individualized learning experience. But it's not enough and it is not enough simply because these "windows" stand at the periphery of the discipline, always aware of their peripheral nature, always expendable. What, of

course, traditionalism fails to appreciate or to understand is that these windows are not simply attractive add-on features of a political science teaching program, tolerated in order for the program to appear "up-to-date" and to respond to the educational demands of the occasional student who has not been properly socialized, but the yawning passageways through which a very different kind of political science teaching will inevitably emerge. The window is not closed, but is wide open, ready for the great migration. The field of public administration, with its fundamental focus on applied public service, has already made it through and so will all the others, leaving the discipline of political science increasingly separated from and irrelevant to the teaching of public affairs.

Outside the window stands non-traditional education, ready and fully capable of responding to the growing new set of educational needs and expectations swelling within the society. It cannot be denied because it represents a better answer to much of the present crisis in public affairs education than do the more traditional institutions. The only question is whether this new direction in education will be forced to develop independently and separated from the traditional discipline or will the discipline be able to adjust itself and welcome it as a full teaching partner.

Our argument is ultimately a dialectical one. The traditional teaching mission of political science, thesis, has been unable to continue to effectively accommodate itself to widespread change in the fundamental educational expectations of the society. Hence, a parallel non-traditional teaching mission has emerged to take up the slack, anti-thesis. The question of synthesis? Well, that's the question, isn't it.

Educating for Public Life

In the recent Carnegie Foundation Report, Higher Learning in the Nation's Service (Carnegie Foundation, 1981) Ernest Boyer, President of the Foundation and past Chancellor of SUNY, and Fred M. Hechinger, President, New York Times Company Foundation, forcefully address the broad question of the overall relationship between contemporary American higher education and the public life of the society at large.

"Higher Education in America," they write, "is suffering from a loss of overall direction," reflected in an important measure by "our larger confusion as a nation..... Today, higher education appears to be adrift because, in some respects, the nation is adrift."

Beginning with this fundamental theme and sense of urgency, the Report goes on to acknowledge that "higher education, like much of the rest of the society, seems to have lost confidence in its own purposes and goals" and, lacking a general vision and inspiration, higher education has often become little more than "consumer-driven enterprises, following the marketplace, constantly juggling goals and programs to meet new demands."

In contrast to this less than encouraging judgment, the Report reaches back into our national past, to reflect upon the time not so very long ago when the chief ends of higher learning were more strongly linked to national purposes, when, as the Report suggests, the chief goals of higher learning were "to train the clergy and new educational leadership; to combat the restlessness of youth in a developing country; to instill in students piety, loyalty and responsible citizenship; and to transmit knowledge that would be useful, not merely in the classical

sense of preparing gentlemen, but for the practical demands of a changing world."

In the wake of our great revolutionary and constitutional periods, it was to be the great task of higher education to become "nurseries of wise and good men to adapt our modes of teaching to our peculiar form of government." Higher education was to play a prominent role in assisting the society to achieve the "more perfect union" envisioned by our constitutional fathers. Education and the American democratic republic were to be strong and mutually supporting allies. American education was to be far more than merely the general "instructional aim" of the society. It was itself to become a major institution of republican self-government, training up generations of men and women to live and sustain free and productive lives.

The basic challenge laid down by the Carnegie Report to contemporary education is that, as a nation, "we must know more about our own human resources, the physical universe, about our social and political systems, about how the earth's resources can most efficiently be used, and how our heritage can be more fully understood." Within this general setting, then, the Report focuses upon two basic concerns of direct relevance and importance to Public Affairs education -- the currently appalling low level of information which Americans possess concerning public affairs and public policies and the equally appalling decline of public confidence in the Nation's public institutions.

Americans are clearly and rapidly drifting toward a state of wide-spread political indifference, derived substantially, the Report argues, "from the pace of social change and a great gap between public issues and public understanding." Today "public policy circuits appear to be dangerously overloaded."

"As a nation, we are becoming civically illiterate. Unless we find better ways to educate ourselves as citizens, we run the risk of drifting unwittingly into a new kind of Dark Age - a time when small cadres of specialists will control knowledge and thus control the decision-making process. These high priests of technology will understand, or claim to understand, the complicated issues, telling us what we should believe and how we should act in this new age of growing confusion. Citizens would make critical decisions, not on the basis of what they know, but on the basis of blind faith in one or another set of professed experts.

For those who care about government 'by the people,' this upsurge of apathy and decline in public understanding cannot go unchallenged. In a world where human survival is at stake, ignorance is not an acceptable alternative. The replacement of democratic government by a technology or the control of policy by special-interest groups is not tolerable."

Reflecting that "for over 300 years in this country, higher learning and the larger purposes of society have been intertwined," the Report laid down its most urgent challenge. "Schools and colleges must help students understand the process by which public policy is shaped and prepare them to make informed, discriminating judgments on questions that will alter the nation's future." Restoring public confidence in democratic institutions and narrowing the "great gap between public issues and public understanding" so that the mass of society can more effectively participate within those institutions needs to be elevated to a position of high priority within the educational agenda of the university.

"The story of America and the story of higher learning are interwoven, and because of this intimate relationship, both the academy and the nation have been enriched. But how is the role of higher education to be redefined in terms that do not merely recall the past, but anticipate and respond adequately to the nation's future? This is the urgent question colleges and universities must now confront."

It was within this dominant perspective, then, that we need to understand and address the current state of public affairs education and to assess its basic functions within the framework of the larger educational mission of the university. To what extent and with what success is higher education accomplishing its basic public purpose? How could the university more effectively deliver and apply its knowledge and teaching resources to the identification, analysis and solution of such basic public problems as the need:

- . to assist both the individual citizen and the general society to cope effectively with existing and emerging political, social and economic conditions
- . to develop the skills and provide the framework for evaluative discourse concerning public matter (from both a moral/ethical and an empirical perspective)
- . to transmit the basic political beliefs and norms of the society from one generation to the next
- . to broaden and strengthen public levels of confidence, and self-esteem in public matters
- . to train up individuals to assume positions of leadership within the political society
- . to improve and maintain high levels of individual and institutional performance within the professional public service

These are the chief ingredients of a public affairs education which are currently challenging the more traditional scientific and disciplinary concerns within political science for a far greater level of formal recognition within the field than they presently possess.

Public Affairs Education At A Crossroads: An Overview

Broad-based public affairs education is in the midst of a two-fold institutional crisis. On the broadest level is the question regarding the future of public affairs instruction within the social sciences generally. Of more narrow concern is the question regarding its future within the specific discipline of political science. The crisis reflects both substantive and organizational dimensions.

In his key note address to a recent conference of undergraduate public affairs educators, Warren Ilchman, Director of the New York based Rockefeller Institute of Government, raised a number of important questions regarding the present state of public affairs education within the social sciences. ("Public Affairs Education: Endangered Species or Cornerstone of the Liberal Arts," SUNY Conference on Public Affairs Education, October 21-22, 1982.)

Ilchman began his remarks by stating his belief that "it is the obligation of institutions of higher education to educate people to assume their citizenship." This obligation is as important as the need to prepare students for a career or to instruct them in the abstract analytical disciplines. "How a people publically determine their priorities and what those priorities are and why and with what outcomes they are pursued, are subjects equal to knowing what are the properties of the universe and the beauty of language, art and music."

Referring to the long and deep tradition within higher education in America of a Jeffersonian conception of public affairs education as lying at the heart of the liberal undergraduate curriculum, Ilchman raised one of the major concerns of his address, the need to understand why public affairs education has come to lie "at the margin rather than at the center of the liberal arts." Much of this understanding, he argues, can be gained by looking at the continuing relationship between a broad public affairs education traditionally organized around a concern for "problems" - the "great issues" of social and political life - and the developing social science disciplines which came to be increasingly dominated by a concern for "process." This evolving relationship completely altered the primary focus of public studies within higher education in America as "science" increasingly displaced "society" as the major ultimate focus and organizing principle. "Until one depersonalized social phenomena, until one acquired an accurate statement of process without reference to specific problems, the chief proponents of process claimed, it was unlikely that true scientific knowledge would occur, knowledge where fact and value were clearly distinguishable."

In the late fifties and sixties, the trend toward completely process oriented social sciences began to ebb as increasing numbers of social scientists began to feel that public studies devoid of any specific sense of "place" or "purpose" were inadequate for both teaching and research, that process scientists were in error in assuming that one could talk meaningfully about process without including specific geographical and cultural environments in that discussion. These efforts resulted in the emergence of "area studies" in the 1960's and "policy studies" in the 1970's within most of the social science disciplines.

Though Ilchman stressed the impact of the general development of the social sciences upon public affairs education, he also paid attention to a more recent development, the emerging public concerns regarding performance and productivity within the public sector. Though he sees the emergence of these concerns as threatening to draw general public affairs education increasingly away from its traditional liberal arts base, he also sees it as a plus for public affairs education in its struggle against the process scientists. "It would be my hunch that those programs that try to focus on the capacity of our institutions, bureaucratic and party political, to address public problems and the effectiveness of those efforts, will engage the conventional social scientists on campuses and allow for less discontinuity between what goes on in conventional disciplines and what goes on in public affairs education.... I personally believe that the correlation of public affairs education with citizenship, on the one hand, and performance on the other, will be the strongest claim we can make."

This same kind of general argument which Ilchman makes regarding the social sciences generally can be made regarding the relationship of broad-based public affairs education within the more specific field of political science. As the field, in both its research and teaching agendas, increasingly abandoned its traditional concern with public problems in favor of the more analytical concerns

of process, it has become less and less relevant to the daily public lives of people. As we have allowed ourselves to become far more interested in science than in citizenship we have traded away the essential core and social usefulness of our discipline. Hence, to paraphrase the Carnegie Report, the basic challenge currently facing political science educators is to resharpen our vision of public affairs education and begin to more effectively reassume our basic responsibility for assisting students in better understanding the basic purposes and dynamics of contemporary public life and to better prepare them to make informed, discriminating judgments and to better develop those skills that will affect the nation's future.

Some of the adjustments that are required of the field are curricular, some are methodological, *i.e.*, in terms of both what is taught and how it is taught. These needs arise from two major sources: 1) from such society-wide public conditions as those identified and discussed by the Carnegie Report, and 2) from the changing nature of the nation's undergraduate student body encompassing large new groups of people demanding both new kinds and new forms of educational opportunities.

At least four major areas of new "market" conditions and expectations are currently confronting the profession on an increasingly massive scale. Over the next decade, these can be expected to change the institutional face of the discipline, particularly its basic teaching mission.

Expanded Opportunities For Applied Professional Studies:

Emerging new needs and demands in this area extend well beyond traditional undergraduate public administration and political science course offerings embracing an ever widening variety of institutional and policy areas such as the application of computers in public decision-making, basic legislative and bureaucratic staff skills, policy areas such as energy, environment, social services etc., public relations, campaign administration, health care delivery systems and the like.

Expanded Opportunities For Basic Citizenship/Leadership Instruction And Training:

It is indeed unfortunate, for both students and the society at large, that the discipline has systematically abandoned its long, traditional commitment to adequately preparing students for future roles as effective citizens and leaders within the public life of the society. Little attention is currently paid to the full development of the "public self" beyond a very basic descriptive level. New instructional formats need to be developed to assist students to become more politically efficacious, aware and informed and to allow them to develop and test a variety of citizenship and leadership roles and skills. Responding adequately in this area will inevitably force the discipline to reestablish its traditionally strong links with the liberal arts generally.

Expanded Opportunities For "Individualized," Experiential And Time/Space Flexible Learning Opportunities:

Increasingly today's students are seeking educational opportunities that respond to their needs and aspirations rather than to the requirements of college catalogs and departmental policies. Experiential, "hands on," instruction is becoming more a standard expectation of students rather than the exceptional one as students increasingly seek to integrate theory and practice into a balanced

educational program that adequately serves their intellectual, emotional and work related needs. Given the choice, students will increasingly demand learning schedules that are not tied simply to three "lecture periods" per week given at immutably fixed times but schedules which range over a variety of time and space possibilities.

An Expanded Adult Undergraduate Student Body:

Although the above new kinds of educational needs and expectations are becoming increasingly attractive to the traditional undergraduate student, especially as he or she has the opportunity to experience them directly, the "prime movers" of the present array of challenges facing traditional political science instruction are adult students, often working adults, who have discovered that formal education does not need to end at an early age, that it indeed can become a life long affair and that it does not have to be restricted to the typical "continuing education" kind of program which is as often as not an insult to both student and sponsoring institution. In ever increasing numbers, adults are seeking (demanding) bona fide college degree programs in public affairs areas but, again, with both educational and institutional needs and agendas which often run counter to established curricula and procedures.

With very little reflection indeed, it becomes unarguably obvious that to respond effectively to these emerging new market demands will, of necessity, mean that many of the current curricular and institutional characteristics of the discipline will be required to undergo considerable change. The traditional "closed system" approach characterized by "process thinking," coupled with carefully delineated (and even more carefully protected) sub-fields of study tucked within a fundamentally restrictive and inflexible instructional format is increasingly proving to be dysfunctional for both students and the broader society. But while the current challenge is clear, the profession's willingness, indeed its ability, to develop a successful response is unfortunately, not clear at all.

Toward "Open-System" Education In Public Affairs

As suggested above, three major pressures for change currently face the teaching mission of political science. The first pressure comes from the general society itself in the form of the need to better educate people for effective public life. The second and third come specifically from students in the form of the need to provide 1) a renewed emphasis upon a variety of traditional, but currently devalued substantive and subject matter areas and 2) a variety of new teaching and scheduling formats. To respond effectively to these challenges will require the profession to move away from its current "closed system" arrangements toward a more "open-system" framework.

The idea of open system education is founded upon the belief that the individual student, rather than the institution is the primary actor in the educational relationship and is characterized by the following seven major fundamental principles:

- 1) The Individual Student Plays A Major, Direct And Continuing Role In The Creation And Development Of His Or Her Degree Program And Its Specific Learning Components Within broad limits - the substantive definition of the degree program should be set primarily by individual student needs, experiences, expectations and objectives. Each degree program should be unique, and an expression of the individual student rather than of the predetermined preferences of an impersonal faculty committee. In addition, the Degree Program itself is approached as a

unified and coherent whole, a total, pre-planned learning experience rather than the simple fulfillment of a predefined "distribution" formula. "Applied" and "non-applied" must fade as arbitrary institutionally imposed descriptions of learning. Learning that has no "application" at all is, if even possible in the first place, a monumental waste of time. If these concepts have any meaning at all, it is only found within the framework of the degree program. "Getting an education" can no longer be a matter of "applied" vs. "non-applied" studies, but increasingly, a matter based entirely upon individual and social need.

- 2) Formal Learning Opportunities For Students Extend As Far Beyond Traditional Institutional Arrangements As Necessary For The Effective Completion Of The Degree Program - The needs of the degree program and not the available programs of the institution itself set the parameters within which individual education will occur. While the institution serves as the primary academic base, additional learning resources will inevitably need to be developed - cross-registrations, internships and other community-based experiential settings, independent tutorials and the like.
- 3) Formal Learning Opportunities For Students In A Particular Field Extend As Far Into Other Academic Programs and Curricula As Necessary For the Effective Completion Of The Degree Program - The needs of the degree program and not departmental course offerings set the parameters within which education occurs. Although each degree program will undoubtedly have a particular disciplinary focus, the specific component parts of that program should be able to range freely among a variety of relevant (to the degree program) disciplines. If, for example, a political science "major" finds that his or her specific interests and goals in the field will be better served with substantial learning in the fields of history and psychology, then access to this instruction must be open and unhindered.
- 4) Formal Education Can Be And Should Be A Life Long Process Of Individual Growth And Development - The institutional distinctions between a "normal" four-year degree program and continuing education must fade away in favor of a unified view of individual education whether that education is experienced in concentrated chunks or spread out over a lifetime. A single "delivery system" must be developed through which will flow educational opportunities for everyone.
- 5) Legitimate "College Level" Learning Can Take Place Within Everyday Life Experiences - "Book learning" is essential to educational growth. So is theoretical learning and so is experiential learning. For many adult students, in particular, prior (to embarking on a degree program) experience may have yielded a significant degree of both descriptive and theoretical knowledge for which they should receive appropriate formal academic credit. Degree programs themselves should freely contain those experiential components essential to student learning objectives.
- 6) Formal Education Should Be Available In A Variety Of Time, Space and Modal Arrangements - Education is too important and essential a human service to restrict its full (in terms of both quantity and quality) availability to potential students. New temporal and spatial arrangements need to be developed, on a mass scale, along with new delivery technologies to insure a constant and relatively convenient flow of educational opportunities between academia and the society at large. Like the marketing of any essential mass product, formal

education must become more sensitive and responsive to changing market conditions and needs.

- 7) The Traditional "Classroom" Teaching Responsibilities Of College Faculty Need To Be Significantly Expanded Into The Areas Of Individualized "One-On-One" Instruction And More Qualitative And Continuing Advisor Functions - In the future, the college faculty will have to reassume direct primary responsibility for the overall educational programs of individual students. Degree program planning and implementation must increasingly become a matter of teacher, rather than of general administrative, concern if students are to receive "full service" from educational institutions. Individual student advisement must assume a central position in overall faculty workload rather than the very marginal position it now possesses, and faculty must be prepared to deal with students, in a formal instructional manner, on a one-to-one basis where it is important and necessary to the achievement of student learning goals.

These seven principles form the basis for opening up current educational systems in order for them to respond more effectively to new educational needs, pressures and markets within the society. They will affect every aspect of the way in which higher education is currently operating. They are the windows through which students of the future, in increasing numbers, will escape from the presently closed systems of traditional, disciplinary based instruction.

A first impression of the "open system" model usually conjures up a vision of educational anarchy where "student is king" with faculty and administration relegated to positions of high priced facilitators. On the contrary, however, the open system model is in many ways even more orderly and systematic, in an overall learning sense, than is the closed system approach. The key, of course, is the extent to which faculty are both willing and able to assume the central teaching role which the open system model requires of them. Group teaching will remain essential. Individualized teaching will increasingly become necessary. Student advisement, however -- and herein lies the heart of the matter -- will need to become as much teaching as it remains guidance, in that individualized student degree program planning will emerge at the heart of the learning process and, hence, at the core of the teaching mission of future education.

The Open System Model In Action

Empire State College (ESC) was created in 1971 by the State University of New York (SUNY) to increase higher educational opportunities for adult students whose employment or life style prevented college study in traditional settings. ESC has come to be known as the "College Without Walls" because it has no campus in the traditional sense. Instead, the College delivers its programs through thirty-five learning centers dispersed throughout New York State. These learning centers -- each of which constitutes a tiny college -- range from large operations in New York City, Buffalo and other regional locations with 15-20 faculty to tiny centers in small cities such as Plattsburgh, Jamestown and Auburn with as few as one faculty member. In total, ESC employs over 200 full-time and part-time faculty and approximately 150 support staff and administrators for a total of over 350 persons. The College's budget is less than \$11 million annually although it serves a similar number of students as several SUNY four-year colleges with considerably higher budgets.

ESC's UNIQUE FEATURES

In many ways, Empire State College functions similarly to other small, public liberal arts colleges. Students are required to formally apply, are screened by an admissions process, pay tuition and pursue degrees in a variety of subjects. Curriculum, academic standards, students evaluations and graduation requirements largely are faculty prerogatives.⁴ There are, however, several unique features which set ESC apart from other colleges and make it an appropriate setting from which to draw a case study for this paper. First, and most importantly, ESC offers individualized, largely student directed, independent study. The basic instructional mode involves a faculty member (mentor) in a one-to-one relationship with a student. Group studies are offered but even these usually feature only six-eight, two-hour seminars and require substantial independent study and individual contact between mentor and student. Whether group study or individual, students and mentors negotiate a learning contract which sets forth purposes, learning activities, evaluation criteria and the amount of college credit which the student will earn if the contract is completed. Students may study full-time--which requires credit to be earned at the rate of 1 credit a week while enrolled--or half-time--which requires credit to be earned at the rate of a credit every two weeks. Tuition also is charged at half or full-time rates. Learning contracts may stipulate any amount of credit that is appropriately justified by the work required and may include one component or several. ESC normally does not evaluate with grades. Rather, the mentor generates a narrative evaluation for each component of each learning contract.

A second unique feature at ESC is the absence of a structured curriculum. Degree programs also are individualized and, although the College suggests general guidelines and even a few specific guidelines in certain subject areas, most degree programs are unique, innovative and interdisciplinary. Students not only are encouraged to design their own degree program but are required to do so. One learning contract every ESC student must complete incorporates degree program planning. This study requires a student to explore appropriate academic disciplines, define learning and career goals, and design a degree program which encompasses courses completed at other colleges previously, work or life experiences which are evaluated for credit (discussed below) and learning contracts to be completed at ESC. The degree program planning study is a very challenging and often very rewarding experience for a student. It forces students to engage in thought processes integrating their plans for college study with learning goals and/or career aspirations.

The third unique feature at ESC also is an important feature which attracts students to the College. ESC has developed a very systematic, careful and equitable yet liberal process for awarding credit for prior work or life experiences. The Assessment Process, as it is called, is based on the philosophy that college level learning occurs in many settings. College official statements are careful to point out that ESC does not give credit for experience itself but for college-level learning which is a result of experience. An important portion of degree program planning, discussed previously, constitutes the first step in the assessment process.

Working closely with a mentor, a student carefully constructs a series of essays describing specific work or life experiences and the college-level learning, including a credit request, which has occurred. The College provides periodic workshops to assist students in the mechanics of degree program planning. Students consult college catalogs, descriptions of academic majors and requirements for other colleges and appropriate literature describing the subject areas of various academic disciplines. Frequently, students draw on readings in subject areas in which they have

read on their own. They must avoid overlaps between subject areas for which they are requesting credit and with formal courses taken previously. The essays are part of a large document which the student prepares called a portfolio which contains an overall plan for a particular degree (B.A., B.S., B.P.S., A. S., or A. A.).

On completion and approval by the mentor, the portfolio is submitted to the Assessment Office for technical review. If prior credit is requested, appropriate sections are reviewed by evaluators who are experts in an appropriate field. These evaluators are paid by the College and are asked to determine the legitimacy of the specific amount of credit requested by the student and, if any is determined, whether it is upper or lower division in nature. After the evaluations are complete, the portfolio is examined for approval by a faculty Assessment Committee and the Office of Program Review and Assessment which reports its findings to the College's Academic Vice-President. Upon completion of this process the student receives notification of the "advanced standing" credits that have been approved. This figure becomes the number of credits on which a student's plan of study at ESC is built.

A fourth unique feature is the scheduling flexibility allowed by the ESC instructional process. As stipulated previously, a person may enroll either as a half-time or full-time student. A student may enroll anytime after attending an orientation which are offered once a month. A student has the option of combining several studies at once and completing them over a longer period or completing a single study over three, four, six or eight weeks (depending on whether it is for three or four credits and whether the student is half or full-time). ESC's policy on withdrawals also contributes to flexible schedules. A student may withdraw anytime for twenty-eight days or longer and during this period tuition is suspended. Students must maintain satisfactory progress to remain in good standing. Satisfactory progress is defined as earning credits at a rate of fifty percent or higher of the amount expected from length of enrollment. Consequently, ESC students are able to determine their own individual learning pace.

A CASE STUDY: DEGREE PROGRAM IN POLICY STUDIES

Each of the authors has worked with a number of students interested in some facet of political science or public administration. One interesting student whose degree program illustrated the advantages of ESC as an "open system" sought a concentration in what he called during initial conversations "policy analysis". This student was employed in a middle-management position with the State agency (unit director) which administers the State's parks, recreation facilities and camping areas. He had completed most of the course work toward an Associate Degree at a local community college ten years previously. He also had completed a number of formal training courses in practical management, decision making and communications subject areas. He aspired to attend graduate school to attain either an MPA or MBA.

After initial discussions to familiarize the student with ESC policies, a tentative agreement was reached to pursue a B.A. in policy studies. Essentially, his degree program included many of the subject areas a student with a major in political science normally would complete along with specialized policy-related studies. Sixty credits were accepted from transcripts, another twenty-eight work/life experience credits eventually attained advanced standing acceptance, for a total of eighty-eight credits. Thus, forty credits remained to be completed as ESC learning contracts. Most of the sixty credits from transcripts were broad-based, liberal arts courses in economics, sociology, history, etc., along with a number of specialized courses in criminal justice (his intended major at the community college). Experiential credits

were granted in management, program administration and budgeting which fell within the concentration and literature (from reading on his own), accounting/bookkeeping (from managing his own part-time business) and advanced communication skills outside of the concentration.

The distribution of the forty credits across subject areas in and outside of the concentration illustrates the flexibility of ESC's learning mode. The initial learning contract was written for eight credits. It included degree program planning (4) which by definition is outside of one's concentration and an advanced study on American Political Institutions (4) within the concentration. The second portion built on the student's considerable governmental and political experience and previous course work and filled in gaps concerning political and governmental institutions and political behavior. The student's major paper assigned as part of this portion of the learning contract focused on the role of committees in legislatures. It drew somewhat on the student's experience with a particular committee in the New York State Legislature as part of his job responsibilities in the agency.

Contract number two contained three study areas: Bureaucracy and Politics (4) and a group study in Research and Analysis (4) within the concentration and Programming in BASIC (4) outside of the concentration. All three studies enabled the student to utilize his employment or ideas drawn therefrom. In Bureaucracy and Politics the student read traditional literature but interviewed persons within his agency as part of the research for a paper on legislative oversight of bureaucracy. His research project in Research and Analysis examined supervisor utilization of employee performance evaluation as a factor in supervisor morale. He designed a questionnaire which was employed to gather information from a sample of supervisors. His project in Programming in BASIC designed a procedure to analyze the data in the supervisor morale study. These projects sparked very interesting discussions in the group study, thereby fruitfully stimulating several other students.

The student's third contract included a political executives (4) component within the concentration and two four credit portions in general learning: Industrial Psychology and Human Resources Management. The latter two primarily were drawn from literature focused on private sector corporate and business activities but the mentors providing the instruction encouraged the student to forge linkages with observations and experience within the State agency. Political executives was a subject area of great interest to the student because of some experience on a campaign for former Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller. Reading and a paper compared governors and presidents and drew on traditional literature.

The student's final contract included a capstone four credit study in the concentration on policy analysis and program evaluation and an innovative four credit, general learning study on management information systems (MIS). The MIS study was classified as general learning because it drew primarily on business oriented literature. The former constituted a survey of the diverse literature on policy analysis and required the student to design a systematic evaluation procedure for a program in his agency. The MIS portion of the student's final contract enabled completion of a project originally begun in a community college criminal justice course ten years earlier. It featured a crime instance reporting system for a local law enforcement agency.

In summary, the student's forty credits included twenty credits in the concentration for a total of thirty-eight (i.e., twelve from experiential and several introductory level political science courses at the Community College) and twenty

outside of the concentration. Thus, his B.A. Degree includes thirty-eight credits in the concentration and ninety in general learning subjects. His studies combined traditional reading and writing experiences with research and observational activities exploiting the student's work setting and built carefully on previous experience and study. He currently is enrolled in a Masters in Public Administration program, part-time, and performing excellently and has been promoted twice since beginning his studies at ESC (now a Division Head).

LESSONS FROM THE CASE STUDY

It seems obvious that the ESC mode served the adult student whose course of study is described previously in an effective manner. It is doubtful any traditional political science program could have served him as well. Primarily, this greater success is attributable to the individualization of the degree program planning process and the careful guidance provided by faculty performing as mentors. The student played a major role in designing his program and in determining the content of specific studies therein. The program was not an abstract series of courses based on prior assumptions which probably would be inappropriate in the case of this student but built on prior learning and experience. Learning opportunities included elements drawn from traditional political science but were not bound by its parameters. The rich resources of the students workplace and the community were exploited fruitfully. The student's learning became part of an intellectual growth closely linked to his professional development and career aspirations. Supportive subject areas both within and outside the concentration were drawn from other disciplines as appropriate.

A significant factor in the success of the College in providing quality education to adult students stems from the role of the mentor. Mentors perform five essential responsibilities which effect the quality of student learning experiences:

1. Primary Mentoring - managing and academic advisement of students assigned at initial enrollment.
2. General Mentoring - direct instruction within subject area speciality (student may be one's own prime mentoree or attached to another mentor).
3. Tutor Supervision - supervision of the tutors providing instruction in specific subject areas not in mentors subject area speciality.
4. Assessment and Evaluation - serving on Assessment Committees on a rotating basis and completing evaluations of prior learning in one's area of expertise.
5. Curricular Development Activities - serving on College governance and other committees with curricular responsibilities or independent professional activities with curricular ramifications.

Working with students on degree program planning and the academic advisement/prime mentoring function generally encourages mentors to broaden their horizons considerably. Gradually one finds the parameters of his/her discipline disappearing as the natural commonalities and linkages among disciplines become too apparent to ignore. Opportunities for interdisciplinary study, which always are possible but usually prevented by rigidified departmental boundaries in traditional settings, abound and, in fact, become inescapable. Because the ESC system encourages students to request credit for experiential learning, even if they have the maximum ninety-six to transfer, it also encourages mentors to view the whole student when providing academic advice or instruction. Thus, the quality of advice is likely to be greater than in traditional settings. Prime mentoring and tutor supervision force mentors to become at least somewhat familiar with disciplines quite remote from their own. Ideally, each mentor has the opportunity for sufficient direct instruction within his/her area of specialization to provide the incentives for remaining professionally up to date as well as ample opportunity to manage and guide students outside of one's area of specialization. Over the long run this balance seems to occur, although it varies somewhat depending on the subject areas for which the mentor primarily is responsible.

One conclusion certainly is tenable. The "open system" represented by Empire State College does not resemble educational anarchy. Although the College's procedures are not perfect and occasionally perplex students with ambiguity and frustrating delays, ESC constitutes a rational and cost-effective way for the State University to serve an important population in New York State. More importantly, in terms of the focus of this paper, the ESC model challenges many assumptions or traditions inherent in conventional political science departments.

Toward a Reconceptualization of the Teaching Mission of Political Science

One of the tests of the usefulness and vitality of the teaching components of any academic discipline is its ability to adapt itself to a changing social environment. The discipline of political science is currently facing such a challenge and the next decade will tell whether or not the teaching mission of the discipline can successfully adapt itself to it.

The challenge comes in two major forms. The first is in terms of changing market conditions where decreasing numbers of traditional enrollments are being supplanted by increasing numbers of adult students who possess quite different sets of educational, professional and scheduling needs from those of their traditional counterparts. The second part of the challenge comes in terms of the basic learning needs of the society as a whole where public affairs education is faced with the challenge to both restore a seriously sagging level of public confidence in public institutions and to provide students with the kinds of information and analysis skills relevant to a democratic political system in a highly unstable, potentially dangerous technological age.

The primary thread that weaves its way throughout this present educational challenge is the "individual," the urgent need to readjust the currently highly impersonal nature of the education industry, so clearly evident within the highly routinized and generally inflexible methodologies of disciplinary teaching, in order to restore individual student needs, rather than institutional needs, as the central focus of higher education. This need is particularly acute within the field of political science since it deals so fundamentally with matters of utmost public concern. To a large extent, the question of higher education's

ability to adapt to the mounting educational challenges within the general social environment will revolve about the ability of political science, as a discipline, to adapt. The field must begin now to reorganize its basic structures and procedures in order to develop a mode of teaching far more sensitive to the learning needs of individuals, as defined by individual students and not by disciplinary habit or legacy.

A major step in the right direction could be taken by the field, especially at the undergraduate level, through the development and utilization of many of the basic principles and procedures of the non-traditional, individually focused learning systems described briefly in this paper. To be sure, such a transition would be neither easy nor smooth for its effects would impact upon the traditional teaching mission of political science in a number of fundamental ways. Some of the more obvious of these can be summarized as follows:

Structural Impacts

- . A diminishment of the traditional operational concept of "administrative department" based along disciplinary lines in favor of "learning programs" based within an increasingly multi-disciplinary framework.
- . A diminishment of institutional activity concerned with pre-defining major field and overall degree program requirements in favor of increased institutional evaluation and assessment of ad hoc degree program proposals submitted by students.
- . A diminishment of institutional concerns and practices based upon an expected four-year, eight-semester academic program in favor of increasing attention to "life long" learning and academic credit for prior (to matriculation) learning experience.
- . A diminishment of attention on providing "in house" educational opportunities in favor of increased attention to "community-based" educational opportunities.
- . A diminishment of commitment to highly structured academic calendars and teaching schedules in favor of more time and space flexible arrangements, which would inevitably result in fewer "mass" lecture courses and more small group and one-on-one learning environments.

Curriculum Impacts

- . A diminished sense of educating students within a particular discipline in favor of an increased sense of a "disciplinary contribution" to individual degree programs.
- . A diminishment of focus upon theoretical and abstract studies in favor of an increased emphasis upon basically informational and applied studies.
- . A diminishment of the traditional single teacher and entirely discipline-based course in favor of increased utilization of team teaching based upon a variety of relevant liberal arts fields.
- . A diminishment of attention upon standard, disciplines based, degree programs in

favor of an increased attention to programs of study oriented around general public related topics, themes, policy issues or professional activities.

- . A diminishment in the numbers of pre-designed courses and course syllabi in favor of increased opportunity for students to create (with faculty assistance) their own educational studies.

Personnel Impacts

- . A diminishment of concern for research abilities in favor of increased concern for teaching abilities.
- . A diminishment in the need for lecture skills in favor of increased need for small group and one-on-one interpersonal teaching skills.
- . A diminishment of attention upon the "disciplinary preparation" of faculty in favor of increased attention to a set of broader liberal arts based sensitivities and academic familiarization.
- . A diminishment of "ivory tower" teaching and scholarship in favor of increased community and societal concerns.
- . A diminishment of the traditional "advisory" function focused upon keeping students "on track" with respect to institutional policies and requirements in favor of one focused upon working closely with students in the design of individual-based degree programs and learning studies and in the evaluation and assessment of overall student performance.

Clearly, moving toward non-traditional teaching forms will affect every aspect of current teaching conditions and arrangements within the discipline. To a great extent such a transition will create new structural forms, require new curriculum strategies and call forth a new kind of teaching faculty.

It is important to note, however, that it is not an "either-or" situation. Non-traditional forms do not require the abandonment of all traditional forms. Many traditional structures, curriculum forms and faculty expectations will undoubtedly remain. It is evolution, and not revolution, that is the basic nature of the challenge lying before us. Non-traditional education is not and should not be viewed as, an alternative to conventional forms but as a necessary and needed expansion of them. It is in the synthesis of these two forms that the current challenge will be most effectively met. Group based learning experiences (classroom courses), for example, will and must continue to be a major instructional format for student learning though these too need to undergo a basic reconceptualization which will begin to view them as major learning resources for "open" individualized programs of study rather than as a "closed" system of "what you see is all there is," that, in other words, ultimately insists on viewing students as resources for the discipline rather than viewing the discipline as a primary resource for students. In the former perception lies the basic problem of contemporary higher education, in the latter perception lies its chance for the future. As political science teachers we need to think less about political science and more about providing the kind of public affairs education to students that they, both as a group and as distinct individuals, need and expect from us.

The path from a primarily closed system approach toward a truly open system

approach to political science education will obviously encounter a host of difficulties along the way. But it is a path that must be trod if political science is to continue to carry out its historic teaching mission in an effective manner. With long term commitment and careful planning, however, the transition can be made and the future teaching mission of political science can become as multi-faceted, as individually and socially relevant and productive and as dynamic as the subject matter with which it deals. In the process, it might even become the premier teaching field within all of higher education.

END NOTES

1. For a useful review of public affairs education in the United States see Mary Jane Turner, "Civic Education in the United States," in Derek Heaton and Judith A. Gillespie, eds., Political Education in Flux, (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 49-80.
2. This relationship as it pertains to political science is discussed in Philip H. Melanson, Political Science and Political Knowledge, (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1975), pp. 5-11.
3. See James W. Hall with Barbara L. Kevles. "The Social Implications for Curricular Change in Higher Education" in James W. Hall with Barbara L. Kevles, eds., In Opposition to Core Curriculum, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 13-38.
4. Non-traditional higher education at Empire State College and several other similar institutions is discussed insightfully in James W. Hall (a founder of ESC and President since its inception) with Barbara L. Kevles, "A Model College Education: From A Traditional Viewpoint", in Hall with Kevles, eds., In Opposition to Core Curriculum, pp. 199-220.